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## Can you really larn yersel Geordie?

*A comparison of Tyneside popular dialect literature, corpus data and speaker perceptions.*

Jensen, Marie Møller

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# Can you really *Larn Yersel Geordie*?

**A comparison of Tyneside popular dialect literature, corpus data and speaker perceptions.**

Marie Møller Jensen

Aalborg University (Denmark)

# Overview

- What is popular dialect fiction and what is this talk about?
- Introduction of 4 variables: *divn't*, *wor*, *gan*, *hoy*
- Mini-corpus of Tyneside dialect literature: data and frequencies
- Comparison with DECTE corpus (large corpus of spoken Tyneside English from 1960s, 1990s, and 2007-2009)
- Comparison with questionnaire data (perceived frequencies of use and identification scores)
- Conclusions on what this tells us about dialect literature – can you *larn yersel geordie*?

- Popular dialect literature (what Honeybone and Watson 2013 call *Contemporary, Humorous, Localised Dialect Literature* or *CHLDL*) is meant to entertain and amuse.
- It represents a recognisable form of a local variety which speaks to readers with knowledge of that particular variety.
- While often relying on fairly rude language and jokes, literature of this kind also often take the form of 'handbooks' promising to help you learn a particular variety (*Lern Yerself Scouse*, *Larn Yersel Geordie*, etc).

## LERN YERSELF SCOUSE

How to  
talk  
proper  
in  
Liverpool

A TEACH-YOURSELF PHRASE BOOK BY  
**FRANK SHAW** • EDITED WITH NOTES  
& TRANSLATIONS BY **FRITZ SPIEGL**  
AND A SCOUSE POME BY **STAN KELLY**

Scouse Press • Liverpool

## Lern yerself SCOUSE

Volume 2:  
The ABZ of Scouse by  
Linacre Lane, B.Sc.  
(Bachelor of Scouse)

"How to talk Proper on Merseyside"  
edited by Fritz Spiegl and published by

SCOUSE PRESS LIVERPOOL L8 3SB

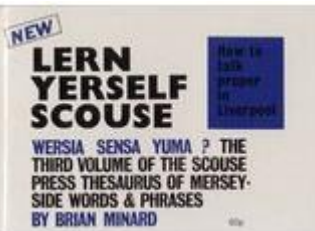
Liverpool's Oldest-established Publisher of  
Local Humour and Local History - founded in 1965.



## Larn Yersel' Geordie



Scott Dobson



- Honeybone and Watson (2013)
  - investigated the representation of selected phonological variables in a variety of Liverpool popular dialect literature
  - argue that features which are represented in popular dialect literature are salient phonological features in the community, index the local in speech and carry social meaning of localness.
- But just how accurate are these types of handbooks and pamphlets in capturing the actual spoken variety they claim?
- Investigation of the frequency of a selection of lexical and morphosyntactic variables in Tyneside English in three different types of data
  - spoken Tyneside English corpus data (NECTE)
  - questionnaire data tapping into speakers' perceptions of frequency and abilities to identify local forms
  - a mini corpus of popular dialect literature.

# Variables part 1

- Divn't

- Sentential negation with *do* is realized as *divn't* and this form dominates the full present tense paradigm apart from the third person singular, which is *doesn't* (possibly realized as *dizn't*, Rowe 2007).
  - (1) [07-08/N/ML/159] Ah I just *divn't* want to get kidnapped.
  - (2) [07-08/N/RM/512] The bars open late now *divn't* they

- Wor

- The first person plural possessive pronoun is *wor* and while this form is unique to the Tyneside area (Jensen 2013), indeed the standard first person pronoun paradigm has been nearly completely re-organized in Tyneside English (this includes the use of *us* in both the plural subject and singular object, for instance).
  - (3) me and Kerry have known each other like, all *wor* life [07-08/T/BB/929]
  - (4) Oh yeah, we're great friends with *wor* next door neighbours [07-08/N/VL/3892]

# Variables part 2

- Gan

- The verb *to go* is realized as *gan* (present tense and present participle only) and is considered a separate verb (rather than a reflection of phonological differences between Standard English and Tyneside English, Jensen 2015). There is some variability in the vernacular paradigm as it seems to occur both with –s in all persons (as is common for some Northern verbs in the present tense, see Beal 2010) and without (possibly following either the regular Standard paradigm or as subject to the Northern Subject Rule, Beal 2010, Jensen 2015).
  - (5) Every-time you *gan* somewhere in that castle, shotgun shell! [07-08/G/DM/456]
  - (6) they constantly had me mam *ganning* up to the school to talk about us and stuff like that [07-08/N/PS/243]

- Hoy

- In Tyneside English we find a different lexical verb for the verb to throw, namely *to hoy*. This verb follows the regular paradigm and also occurs in the present participle (as *hoying*) and the past participle (*hoyed*).
  - (7) they *hoy* it in the microwave and all [07-08/N/PM/85]
  - (8) the police used to *hoy* you over the wall so you'd get in free when you were little. [08-09/N/TS/556]

# Popular dialect literature data

- **Data:** mini-corpus of Geordie popular dialect literature: *Scott Dobson's Geordie Recitations, Songs and Party Pieces; Histry O' The Geordies Book One* (Scott Dobson); *Larn Yersel' Geordie* (Scott Dobson) and *The Geordie Song Book* (edited by Frank Graham). All published between the late 1960s to early 1970s.
- **Method:** all instances across the four books of both Standard and Tyneside English variants of each of the variables were manually extracted and coded for membership in either the standard or vernacular category.

Variable	Standard (N)	Standard %	Vernacular (N)	Vernacular %	Total (N)	Total %
Divn't	20	44.4%	25	55.6%	45	5.0%
Wor	6	7.1%	78	92.9%	84	9.3%
Gan	1	1.1%	91	98.9%	92	10.1%
Hoy	0	0%	15	100%	15	1.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>88.6%</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



# DECTE corpus data

- Data
  - TLS corpus: 1960s, 37 speakers (old/young, WC/MC, male/female)
  - PVC corpus: 1994, 36 speakers, (old/young, WC/MC, male/female)
  - NECTE2 corpus: 2007-9, 48 speakers, (old/young, WC/MC, male/female)

CORPORA	WC				MC			
	Young (17-34)		Old (35+)		Young (17-34)		Old (35+)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
TLS	3	5	5	6	5	6	4	3
PVC	5	5	1	3	6	4	7	5
NECTE2	8	6	6	7	9	6	0	6

# Corpus – raw numbers

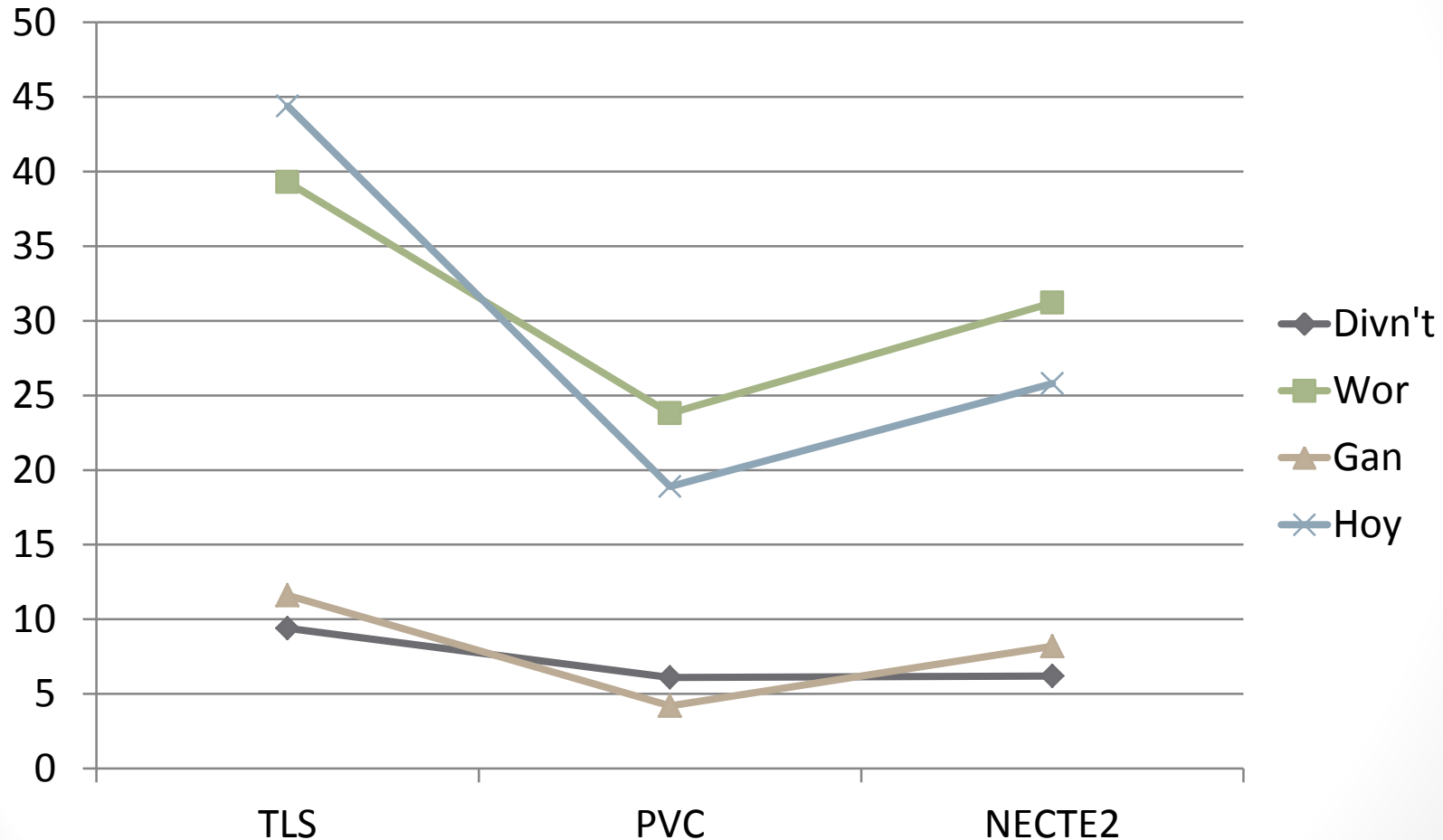
Variables	TLS			PVC			NECTE2		
	St N	Vern N	Total N	St N	Vern N	Total N	St N	Vern N	Total N
Divn't	804	83	887	962	63	1025	1402	92	1494
Wor	37	24	61	186	58	244	152	69	221
Gan	639	84	723	2146	93	2239	1473	132	1605
Hoy	10	8	18	30	7	37	23	8	31
Total	1490	199	1689	3324	221	3545	3050	301	3351

# Corpus – frequencies

Variables	TLS			PVC			NECTE2		
	St %	Vern %	Total %	St %	Vern %	Total %	St %	Vern %	Total %
Divn't	90.6	9.4	100	93.9	6.1	100	93.8	6.2	100
Wor	60.7	39.3	100	76.2	23.8	100	68.8	31.2	100
Gan	88.4	11.6	100	95.8	4.2	100	91.8	8.2	100
Hoy	55.56	44.4	100	81.1	18.9	100	74.2	25.8	100
Total	88.2	11.8	100	93.8	6.2	100	91.0	9.0	100

Lowest frequencies in PVC (1990s) – significant differences over time. Also young, male, WC speakers use more vernacular forms in more recent data (Jensen 2013).

# Percentage of vernacular items

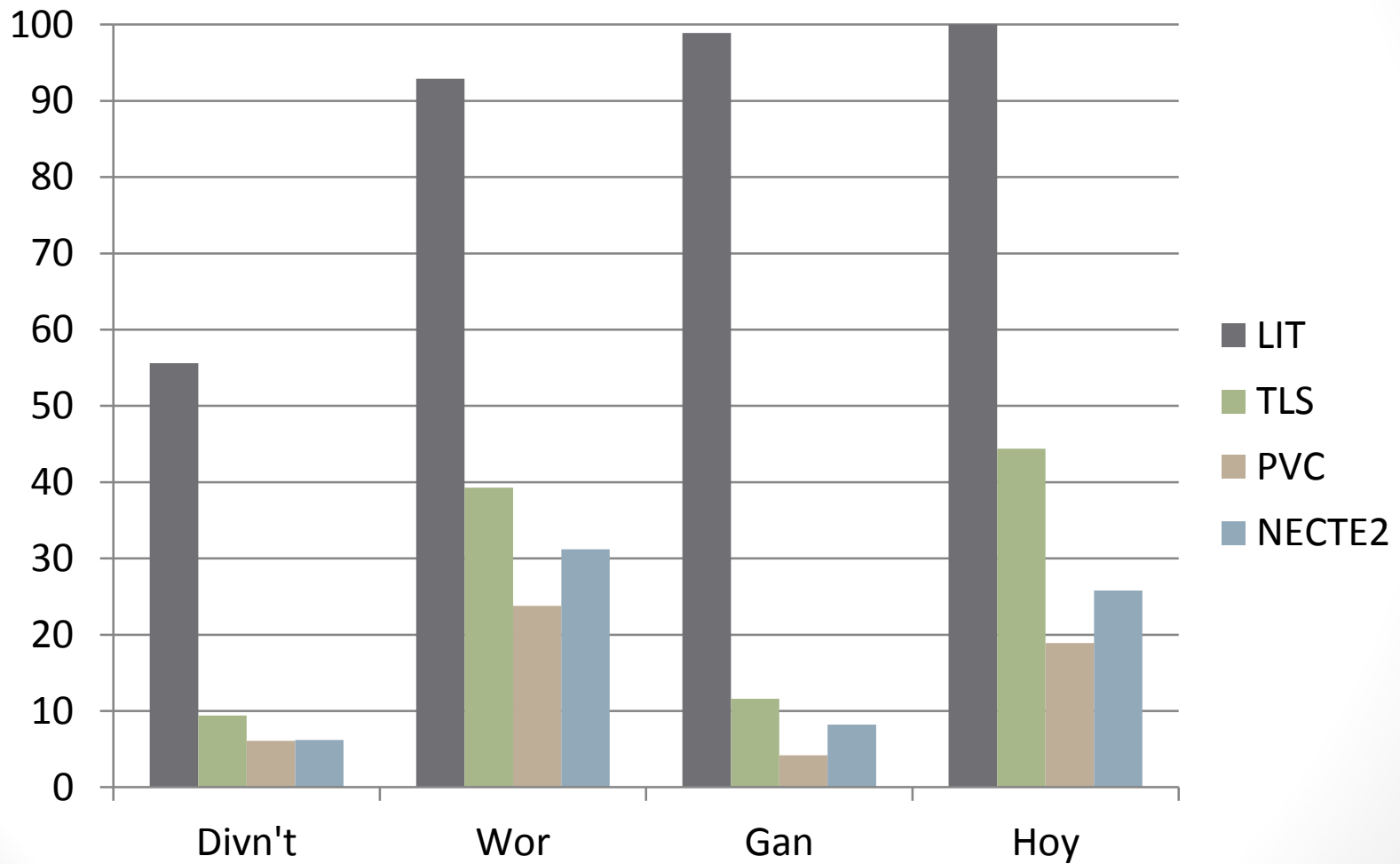


# Corpus and literature compared

- Comparison of the proportion of vernacular items in the three corpora and in the dialect literature

Variables	TLS		PVC		NECTE2		LITERATURE	
	Vern N	Vern %	Vern N	Vern %	Vern N	Vern %	Vern N	Vern %
Divn't	83	9.4	63	6.1	92	6.2	25	55.6
Wor	24	39.3	58	23.8	69	31.2	78	92.9
Gan	84	11.6	93	4.2	132	8.2	91	98.9
Hoy	8	44.4	7	18.9	8	25.8	15	100

# Percentages compared



# Questionnaire data

- 143 questionnaires collected summer 2012.
- Tested 12 variables and elicited judgments of perceived frequency of use in speech of others, own use, identification of forms as local to Tyneside, social affiliation.
- Results used here:
  - Frequency in other's speech (scale of 1-7)
  - Frequency in own speech (scale 1-7)
  - Identification score (number of times form identified correctly in %)

# Questionnaire ratings and identification scores

- Comparison of the questionnaire ratings and identification scores with the proportion of vernacular items in the dialect literature

Variables	Other's use		Own use		Identification score		Literature	
	N	Rating (1-7)	N	Rating (1-7)	N	% correct	Vern N	Vern %
Divn't	46	5.22	142	3.18	142	93.0	25	55.6
Wor	48	5.11	141	3.11	141	90.9	78	92.9
Gan	46	4.51	142	3.23	142	90.9	91	98.9
Hoy	48	5.96	141	4.23	141	93.7	15	100



# Concluding remarks

- Results support Honeybone & Watson's claim that popular dialect literature *can* give us an indication of which linguistic forms are salient and index local affiliation.
- Results provide some evidence for a connection between speakers' awareness of vernacular forms and the social indexical value of these forms which allows them to be used in the construction of a linguistic identity. This not only supports Honeybone and Watson's claims of the validity of this type of studies (quantitative studies of popular dialect fiction in and of their own but also underlines their place and significance in broader studies based on a range of empirical data.

# Concluding remarks

- The language captured in the popular dialect literature precedes the latest corpus data and the questionnaire data by several decades. This would allow it (and the vernacular forms it represent specifically) to become indexical of the community and thus enregistered. In other words, it has had ample time to shape the perceptions speakers hold of other speakers in the speech community, whereas the way speakers actually speak *right now* (or in 2007-2009 as captured in the NECTE2 data used in this study) has not been available for participation in enregisterment processes to the same extent.
- Popular dialect literature does not capture *real* Tyneside English (and is thus not good for *larning yersel Geordie*) but perhaps rather an *idea* of Tyneside English